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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KHARTOUM 000524

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STATE FOR AF A/S FRAZER, SE WILLIAMSON AND AF/SPG
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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [ECON](#) [EAID](#) [SOCI](#) [MOPS](#) [SU](#)
SUBJECT: SPLM'S EDWARD LINO IN ABYEI: ESCALATING TENSIONS,
BUT NO CONFLICT YET

REF: A. KHARTOUM 507
[1](#)B. KHARTOUM 508

Classified By: CDA Alberto Fernandez for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: According to SPLM-appointed Abyei Administrator Edward Lino, the NCP is ratcheting-up tension in Abyei by sending SAF and police reinforcements to the region, and by seeking to incite Misseriya herdsman against the Ngok Dinka. The Misseriya have resisted this ploy and Lino hopes to establish a basis for peaceful coexistence between the two. The U.S. delegation and Lino,s staff discussed USAID proposals for short-term, high impact development projects. While Lino blamed NCP machinations for increased tensions, his own SPLM also has aggravated the situation. Reftels report on other meetings during CDA Fernandez,s April 2-3 visit to Abyei and Muglad. End Summary.

[1](#)2. (C) On April 2, CDA Fernandez, accompanied by USAID Mission Director Fleuret, and State and USAID Emboffs, met in Abyei with the SPLM's unilaterally appointed Administrator Edward Lino and his cabinet. The Charge noted that the Abyei region has been without an established government for three years and that that this is the fault of the National Congress Party (NCP). While decisions on Abyei are to be decided between the NCP and SPLM, there are practical steps that can be taken to relieve the problems in Abyei. First, the parties could allow the establishment of a government by either accepting the Abyei Boundary Commission report or reaching an acceptable compromise with the SPLM. Second, UNMIS must be allowed to patrol outside of Abyei town. Third, interference with the work of NGOs, by both parties and their military, in the area needs to stop.

Escalating Tensions

[1](#)4. (C) Lino said that the SPLM knows and appreciates the U.S. position and that this support is needed now. He said that on March 30 tensions had sharply escalated, when the SAF deployed a force of 230 men, several light vehicles and four trucks to Abyei. (Comment: Other contacts in Abyei told CDA that the tension had begun to escalate with Lino,s own previous arrival with a company-sized SPLA &bodyguard,8 in vehicles armed with heavy weapons. End comment.) Lino said he had conferred with SAF commanders to reduce tensions. However, rampant unsubstantiated rumors were creating fear and further increasing tensions among the population. Khartoum was continuing to dispatch forces to the region. The latest reports he had heard was that 300 police were on the way, and "it is they who usually start trouble". He noted that CDA Fernandez's visit had temporarily defused tensions by delaying the introduction of these new forces for a few

days.

15. (C) The Charge responded that the U.S. is seeking to send a strong political message to Khartoum: that Abyei is a key U.S. concern in Sudan. The U.S. is putting increased emphasis on the CPA-designated "Three Areas", including Abyei. Secretary Rice had told FM Deng Alor (himself an Abyei native) during his visit to Washington that the U.S. is willing to quietly help resolve the Abyei crisis, if the parties wish. CDA said that two days earlier he warned GNU Presidential Advisor Nafie Ali Nafie that, in the short-term, among the things that could derail the possible discussion of improvement of relations now being explored by Khartoum and Washington are the actions of Sudanese supported rebels in Chad and the outbreak of conflict over Abyei.

Short-Term, High Impact USAID Projects

16. (C) USAID Director Fleuret told Lino that his staff would brief Lino's Administration separately on existing USAID activities in Abyei, but that the U.S. wants to do more to relieve the situation. USAID is considering three short-term, high-impact development projects that could improve peoples lives: building an Abyei airstrip capable of year-round operations, constructing feeder roads, and providing training and capacity building for local people. These three initiatives could be started relatively quickly, would improve the delivery of needed services to the rural population and would facilitate other, future projects.

Misseriya Resisting NCP Incitement

17. (C) Abyei Administration Secretary General Malony Tong said that the NCP-controlled Popular Defense Forces had

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planned a raid on a Ngok Dinka cattle camp, seeking to provoke a Dinka-Misseriya conflict. However, traditional leaders of both groups calmed the situation. According to Tong, it was when the NCP saw that the Misseriya did not want war, that they made the decision to send SAF reinforcements to Abyei. He said that the NCP also is attempting to stir discontent among the Misseriya by telling them that the new Administration is there only to help the Dinka.

18. (C) Tong said the SPLM and the Administration recognize the right of the Misseriya to migrate annually with their cattle through Abyei, and to receive government services in their own home area (i.e., in the Muglad region, north of Abyei), but not on Dinka lands to the south. With U.S. political and material support, Tong said, Lino's Administration can resist NCP pressure and begin undertaking development projects.

Returning IDPs Add to Stress

19. (C) Lino said that 74 busses and trucks loaded with several thousand returning IDPs and their belongings had arrived in Abyei in just the last few days. This stream of returnees was adding to the Dinka-Misseriya tensions in the region. (Note: Our sense is that IDP's are being pushed into Abyei by the SPLM not only for the census, but also to increase Dinka numbers in the event that fighting breaks out. End note.) He described the returnees as &Dinka-plus,8 who had been living in the Khartoum area for years and were used to the urban services available there. On returning to Abyei, they were finding that the region's human and livestock population had grown, while the availability of water and other resources had declined. Returning young people were finding fewer resources on which to live, leading to increased competition between Dinka and Misseriya.

Peaceful Dinka-Misseriya Coexistence

10. (C) Lino said he is working to organize a Dinka-Misseriya peaceful-coexistence conference to discuss

these issues and reduce tensions. Lino said the problem is not the Misseriya. Rather, the NCP is seeking to manipulate the Misseriya for its own ends. He added that the three possible initiatives outlined by USAID Director Fleuret would help relieve these pressures. Personally, he did not think there would be conflict, &the NCP is not that crazy.⁸ USAID would have a secure environment in which to work.

Dealing with the HAC

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¶11. (C) Director Fleuret raised obstruction that USAID-partners and other NGOs have faced from the Government of National Unity's Humanitarian Assistance Committee (HAC). He noted that in parts of Sudan, HAC is both very powerful and very obstructive. In others, HAC is weak. The U.S. would prefer to see a very weak HAC in Abyei. Lino said that HAC does not have a presence in Abyei, but that it could try to cause problems from its headquarters in Khartoum. He recommended that NGOs route their activities in Abyei through Juba instead.

Comment

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¶12. (C) Lino and his staff echoed what we heard in other meetings with both Dinka and Misseriya in Abyei and Muglad: that while there are (and always have been) irritants between the two groups, they also have lived peacefully side-by-side in the past and there are no fundamental conflicts between them now that need lead to fighting. Left to themselves, they would be able to work out their differences peacefully. Targeted development projects also would be a big help. However, Lino told only half of the story. The NCP is not alone in raising tensions in Abyei. The SPLM has its own (not necessarily benign) local agenda and seeks to use Abyei to serve those purposes. Local Misseriya and UN officials in Abyei told of credible reports of chauvinistic speeches by Lino encouraging Dinka irredentism. While the establishment of an effective administration in Abyei is to be welcomed, Lino's own aggressive actions there (as the SPLM representative and "unofficial" administrator) probably have contributed at least as much to the problem as to its solution.
FERNANDEZ